



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park
Post Office Box 52
Hawaii National Park, Hawai'i 96718-0052

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L7617 (HAVO)

June 20, 2005

Dear Interested Party:

The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park Wildland Fire Management Plan Environmental Assessment (EA) was approved January 4, 2005. The FONSI is the decision document for the EA. It describes the preferred alternative, presents the alternatives considered, summarizes public involvement, and makes a finding of no significant impact.

The EA evaluated two alternatives:

Alternative 1 – No Action. Continue current fire management policies, goals, and strategies described in the approved 1990 Fire Management Plan. These include immediate suppression of all unplanned fires of human origin and suppression of all wildland fires, with no role for wildland fire use (that is, all lightning and lava caused fires will be suppressed). The no action alternative provides for experimental use of prescribed fire for ecological restoration and for rare species recovery. Prescribed fire would be allowed only in those areas of the park where there are extensive barriers to fire spread past the park boundaries.

Alternative 2 includes all changes to be made to the park's Fire Management Plan. It broadens the use of prescribed fire as a management tool for restoring native vegetation in the Coastal Lowland and Mid-Elevation Seasonal Fire Management Units (FMUs), areas of the park most altered by invasive weeds. Alternative 2 allows the spread of lightning or lava caused fires in small, isolated kipuka in the Coastal Lowland, Subalpine, and Alpine FMUs, which will provide opportunities for evaluating fire effects and the use of fire as a restoration technique. Most fires from lava flows or lightning will still be suppressed in the park, including those occurring in other FMUs and those occurring in the Coastal Lowland, Subalpine, and Alpine FMUs that are not in isolated kipuka or that are in areas where fire would threaten park resources.

Actions common to both alternatives are: The park will continue to suppress unplanned fires of human origin. The park will continue to control invasive fountain grass, a potentially hazardous fuel that colonizes young, sparsely vegetated lava flows and dry forests and shrublands. Limited use of manual and chemical treatments will continue to prevent the widespread establishment of new alien species and facilitate native plant revegetation, including rare plants. The park will maintain or establish fuel breaks in fire-prone areas or in high value resource areas, either mechanically or by establishing fire-resistant vegetation. The park will revegetate burned areas with fire-tolerant, native vegetation environments if feasible and necessary.

After careful review of public comments and impacts to affected resources and visitor use, the NPS selected Alternative 2, the preferred alternative as presented in the EA, for implementation. Both of the alternatives, Alternative 1 and Alternative 2, protect park resources and prevent the spread of invasive species by requiring the suppression of fires, both from human origin and

natural origin; prevent the spread of fountain grass; using fuel breaks as a strategy; and encourage revegetation of burned areas. However, Alternative 2 was selected as the preferred alternative because it best meets the park objectives of developing and improving the park's fire management program to protect human life, property, and cultural resources and to maintain or restore nature resources.

An Errata Sheet was prepared, as an attachment to the EA, to clarify the intent and detail of analysis concerning specific elements of the proposed fire management actions, as discussed in the EA. The Errata Sheet and the original EA form the final EA.

The FONSI and Errata sheet may be reviewed electronically on the Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park web site at <http://www.nps.gov/havo/manage/plan.htm>. A paper-copy of the FONSI and Errata Sheet may be obtained by writing:

Fire Management Plan Environmental Assessment
NPS
P.O. Box 52
Hawai'i National Park, Hawai'i 96718

If you have questions, please contact Kay Molhoek at 985-6026 or by email at HAVO_Superintendent@nps.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/ Cynthia L. Orlando
Cynthia L. Orlando
Superintendent

Enclosure

Bcc:

Central Files

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